

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method for the cooling of cleaned and disinfected items contained in a chamber of an automatic cleaning and disinfecting machine that has an outflow at a lower end of the chamber, from which liquid can flow by gravity from the chamber, and a door providing access to the chamber, the cleaned items being disinfected by heat, and a washing or cleaning program with a variable sequence of program steps being executed inside the automatic cleaning and disinfecting machine, said method comprising the following method steps:

- a) effecting a the final cleaning of the items contained in the chamber is carried out using by introducing water with addition of auxiliary agents via spray nozzles into the entire volume of the chamber,
- b) disinfecting the cleaned items contained in the chamber are disinfected by heat,
- c) after the heat disinfection of the cleaned items, forcibly introducing air is forcibly introduced into the entire volume of the closed chamber, and
- d) with the door of the chamber closed, conveying exhaust air is conveyed out of from the entire volume of the closed chamber into the outflow via an exhaust air duct having an exhaust air valve, wherein the outflow contains a siphon bend, and the exhaust duct opens into the outflow at a location downstream of the siphon bend.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that, in the event of a prolonged duration of the removal of moist exhaust air out of the chamber with the door chamber closed, an additional drying of the cleaned items contained in the chamber takes place.

4. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the air introduced into the chamber after the disinfection step is ambient air.

5. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that automatic shut-off elements are provided in the exhaust air duct and in the intake air duct, respectively, for controlling the flow of intake air and exhaust air.

6. (previously presented) The method as claimed in any one of claims 1, 3, 4 and 5, characterized in that the air admitted through the air intake duct of the chamber is guided through a microfilter in order to improve the sterility.
7. (withdrawn) A device for carrying out the method as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that a chamber can be acted upon both by cold water or hot water and also by steam from a water/steam unit, the cold water/hot water being introduced via spray nozzles, the chamber being connected to an outflow via an exhaust air duct, and the chamber having an outlet mouth of an openable or closable intake air duct via which the chamber in the closed state can be acted upon by air.
8. (withdrawn) The device as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the outlet mouth of the supply line via which the chamber can be acted upon by steam simultaneously via nozzles is formed either on a roof surface of the chamber or on a back wall or in the lower area or the side walls of the chamber.
9. (withdrawn) The device as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that automatic shut-off elements which are either spring-controlled or weight-controlled or membrane-controlled or controlled by differential pressure or designed as nonreturn valves are received in the lines for intake air or exhaust air connected to the chamber.
10. (withdrawn) The device as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the shut-off elements are designed as forcibly controlled shut-off elements.